

Falcon AMF keeps Weapons School students soaring



Clockwise, Senior Airman James Stillwell talks to a pilot prior to launch. Staff Sgt. Ryan DuFrair, Chief Master Sgt. Steven Avilla, Staff Sgt. George Russell and Airman Stillwell, from Falcon, conduct a FOD walk. Airman First Class Shawn Flanagan talks with Staff Sgt. Patrick Young during a systems check of an F-16.



**By Staff Sgt. Ed Scott
AWFC Public Affairs**

Generating airpower for the USAF Weapons School is the mission of approximately 180 people assigned to the 57th Aircraft Generation Squadron Falcon Aircraft Maintenance Flight.

According to Chief Master Sgt. Steve Avilla, maintenance superintendent, Falcon generates between 16 and 24 sorties a day with 24 F-16s. Falcon also maintains the 57th Wing flagship, the USAF Weapons School commandant's aircraft and the school's 50th anniversary flagship.

"We're the only AMF at Nellis that has one operation," Chief Avilla said. "All the other units split their assets between fighter training and test missions –we're strictly Weapons School."

Last year Falcon met 100 percent of its

contracted 4,100 sorties along with being selected as 57th Wing AMF of the month eight times.

It's a unique challenge having to provide safe, reliable and effective aircraft for some of the best F-16 pilots in the Air Force," said Capt. Michael Miles, Falcon AMF commander.

Since the unit was a huge success last year, Capt. Miles presented the unit with a challenge to begin the new year – to launch 18 aircraft at once as if they were going to war.

"They accepted the challenge and it was a huge success," he said. "They proved we could launch aircraft for war just like any other fighter unit in the command."

The unit was able to launch 17 out of 18 (Jan. 7) with 19 aircraft available. The exercise also proved to be a excellent moral booster.

"Our mission is a little different than other units I've been assigned to," said Staff Sgt. Jeff Forer, a crew chief. Sgt. Forer was

stationed in Europe for six years prior to Nellis. He has been here for more than two years. "Training pilots is important, and since that is our one focus, it makes our mission easier."

Staff Sgt. Ryan Dufrain, a weapons load crew chief, has been at Nellis for five years although he's been a member of Falcon for only six months.

"When I was at Kunsan (Air Base, Korea), our mission was larger, but we had more experienced people, many more crews and basically loaded one or two different munitions," he said. "Here we have people right out of tech school with no experience, and we have to be qualified to load almost everything in the inventory to meet the needs of the Weapons School's students. Because of this, we require more training on our part."

Along with the training, Falcon sends aircraft and maintainers to Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla., for one week for the school's Weap-

ons System Evaluation Program as well as deploy aircraft to the local live ordnance loading area twice a year for graduation exercises.

"Weapons School is a tough commitment and I don't see this as training – yes, we are here to train but what they (Weapons School students) do has a faster pace because of their syllabus than other training missions," said Master Sgt. Jim Wescott, a Falcon section chief.

"The pace is hectic with constant aircraft configuration changes and constantly changing shift schedules due to range times, but the attitude is great," said Master Sgt. Todd Springhorn, a section chief. "The people know what they need to do, and if we don't have enough people to get it done, the people over come and adapt."

"Our people are not just good maintainers – they are some of the best in the Air Force," said Capt. Miles. "We are looking forward to another successful year."



Photos by Staff Sgt. Molley Gilliam



Above, Senior Airman Willy Brown does an intake foreign object damage inspection on an engine. Bottom, a crew chief holds an F-16 in chocks prior to launch.

